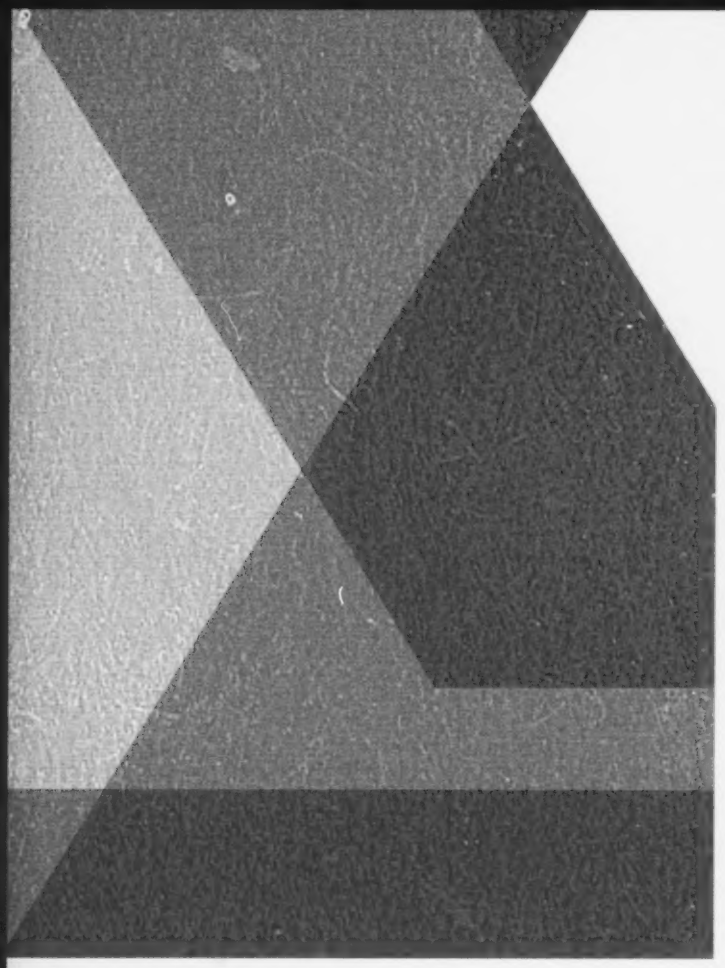

Business Plan

2018–19

Department of Natural Resources

NOVA SCOTIA

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2018

Budget 2018–19: Business Plan
March 2018

ISBN: 978-1-55457-821-4

Department of Natural Resources 2018-19 Annual Plan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Minister	Page 1
Ministerial Mandate	Page 2
Strategic Priorities	Page 2
Key Initiatives for 2018-19	Page 3
• Mineral Resources Development Fund (MRDF)	Page 3
• Independent Review of Forest Practices	Page 3
• Biodiversity Act	Page 4
• Biodiversity Council	Page 4
• Trail Connectivity	Page 5
• Mineral Resources Act and Regulations	Page 5
• Amendments to the Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations	Page 5
• Land Titles Initiative	Page 5
• Accessibility Act Commitment and Plans	Page 6
Natural Resources Expenses Summary	Page 7

Department of Natural Resources 2018-19 Annual Plan

Message from the Minister

We are pleased to present our 2018-19 Business Plan which outlines our commitment to managing our natural resources, and describes key initiatives for the coming year.

We will continue to make informed decisions based on science, that reflect balanced and sustainable management practices, and strengthen public trust in the management of our natural resources. We will continue to improve transparency and accountability through better tracking and reporting, and improved data and knowledge sharing.

In 2018-19, we will create a new Mineral Resources Development Fund, which will replace the existing Mineral Incentive Program. The Fund will assist prospectors, exploration companies, and researchers in the search for new discoveries, help advance projects, and attract investment.

We are excited to move forward with a new Biodiversity Act that will address legislative gaps and manage emerging risks. It will also improve the conservation and sustainable use of wild species and ecosystems in flexible and adaptive ways.

The Land Titles Initiative is a priority for several departments, including Natural Resources, that will help applicants in five African Nova Scotian communities who have faced barriers to seek and attain clear title to land. With our partners, we are moving forward with a new approach, with a dedicated team and with funding that will pay for eligible fees and costs required to get land title.

Last year Nova Scotians celebrated 100 per cent connectivity on the Great Trail in Canada. This year, we will work to improve Nova Scotia's trail connectivity by working with communities, other government departments and trails groups.

We also look forward to a report this spring from the Independent Review of Forest Practices. The report is expected to provide recommendations regarding how Nova Scotia balances long-term environmental, social and economic interests in managing the province's forests.

I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Natural Resources for their hard work and commitment to delivering important programs and services to Nova Scotians. We are proud of the work we have accomplished and look forward to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

We encourage you to take some time to read this business plan and to learn more about our department by visiting www.novascotia.ca/natr

Sincerely,

Original signed by

The Honourable Margaret Miller
Minister of Natural Resources

Ministerial Mandate:

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has broad responsibilities relative to the management, development, conservation and protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, geological and park resources, as well as the administration of the province's Crown land. In addition to our core operations and obligations, the following actions were identified as priorities in the Minister of Natural Resources' 2017 Mandate Letter.

- Create a Mineral Resources Development Bank
- Pass a Biodiversity Act
- Create a new Nova Scotia Biodiversity Council
- Expand trail access across Nova Scotia
- Appoint an independent expert to review forestry practices

Our Strategic Priorities:

DNR has established strategic priorities to guide our work in 2018/2019. These include:

- Our People: Cultivate an Engaged, Effective, and Empowered Workforce
- The Public: Strengthen public trust in the management of our natural resources
- Our Services: Deliver services collaboratively, efficiently and effectively
- Our Natural Resources: Manage our natural resources for public benefits

Key Initiatives for 2018-19

Mineral Resources Development Fund (MRDF)

Government Strategic Direction: Inclusive Economic Growth / Strategic Sector Growth

The new MRDF will replace the existing Mineral Incentive Program and is designed to increase mineral exploration and mine development, invest in mineral research for Nova Scotia and provide cooperative education opportunities. Start date of the multi-year project is April 1, 2018.

Budget: $700K (replaces Mineral Incentive Program - $400K).

Through this initiative prospectors, students, and junior exploration companies are provided with funding, technical assistance and training intended to support grass-roots and advanced exploration projects, university and college-based minerals research, major projects, marketing/promoting projects and mineral investment opportunities.

Mineral Resources Act and Regulations

Government Strategic Direction: Inclusive Economic Growth / Strategic Sector Growth

An effective regulatory regime for mineral resource development can support economic prosperity in our province. The implementation of a new Mineral Resources Act and Regulations will result in improved transparency and accountability through better tracking and reporting and improved data and knowledge sharing.

Proclamation of the Act and passage of related regulations will modernize processes and provide clarity to the industry on how to secure and maintain mineral rights in Nova Scotia. The Act provides clear legislation for industry to follow, and for the public to understand; reducing administrative burden and improving government efficiency.

Independent Review of Forest Practices

Government Strategic Direction: Healthy Population & System and Inclusive Economic Growth

Launched in August 2017, the Independent Review of Forest Practices will provide recommendations to improve how Nova Scotia balances long-term environmental, social and economic interests in managing the province's forests. University of King's College President Professor Bill Lahey is leading the review which is examining the following components:

- Evaluate the effectiveness and identify opportunities to improve the legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines, as well as the science-based tools that determine whether and where

- harvesting occurs, as well as the harvesting methods (e.g.: clear cut, partial harvest) that can or should be used.
- Evaluate market access for private forest owners, particularly in the western region, and provide recommendations to address any identified issues.

Natural Resources Minister Margaret Miller has extended the time frame for the Review which, is expected to be completed at the end of April 2018.

Biodiversity Act

Government Strategic Direction: Healthy Population & System and Inclusive Economic Growth

The new Biodiversity Act will provide a tool to address our needs for defining biodiversity, establishing leadership and governance, and managing emerging risks to biodiversity. It will also formally acknowledge our commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity now and in the future.

The Act will support science based decision making, reflect balanced and sustainable management practices, and strengthen public trust in the management and protection of our province's biodiversity assets.

Stakeholder consultations have been conducted and steps necessary for preparation, introduction and passage of legislation are underway.

Biodiversity Council

Government Strategic Direction: Healthy Population & System

The establishment of a Biodiversity Council supports our commitment to making informed decisions based on science, and implementing balanced and sustainable management practices at DNR. It aligns with our desire to strengthen public trust in the management of our natural resources by leveraging arms-length expertise to advise us on our priorities respecting biodiversity.

The Council will be given the responsibility to help craft regulations and recommend new actions that promote biodiversity in Nova Scotia. The advice received from these external subject matter experts will help identify the environmental, economic and social analysis supporting the development of biodiversity legislation and programs.

Trail Connectivity

Government Strategic Direction: Healthy Population & System

The Trail Connectivity initiative is aimed at delivering trail management services efficiently, and effectively by developing and utilizing partnerships to support our mandate and service delivery. To support trail connectivity DNR is working with our trail partner departments and the NS Trails Federation to complete the Nova Scotia Shared Trails Strategy.

DNR will also continue working with communities, other government departments and groups to create more linkages to the Trans Canada Trail and other trails. The goal is to improve the trail, increase its usage, and plan for the long-term sustainability of the Trans Canada Trail.

Amendments to the Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations

Government Strategic Direction: Inclusive Economic Growth

Amendments to the Ministerial Land Transaction Regulations will help us to deliver our services efficiently and effectively. The amendments result from a review of business processes to support consistent operational and service excellence and improve regulatory efficiency.

The regulations, related to routine land transactions, are being updated to provide more efficient service to clients and to bring Nova Scotia more in line with the rest of Canada. The result is improved business processes requiring less time for clients, less staff time and resources to complete transactions.

Land Titles Initiative

Government Strategic Direction: Inclusive Economic Growth

The Land Titles Initiative addresses the Government Strategic Direction of Inclusive Economic Growth and specifically Economic Participation & Benefits. It is anticipated the longer-term impacts will foster economic prosperity for African Nova Scotians who own land in the five communities of North Preston, East Preston, Cherry Brook, Lincolnville and Sunnyville.

Historical disparities and systemic discrimination, including the lack of good title to land within African Nova Scotian communities, have impacted African Nova Scotians enjoyment of their social, economic and cultural rights. The purpose of this Initiative is to address land title issues in five of the 13 Land Title Clarification Areas created pursuant to the Land Titles Clarification Act (LTCA). As a result, residents will receive support to get clear legal title to their land.

Accessibility Act Commitment and Plans

Government Strategic Direction: Inclusive Economic Growth

DNR will make improvements to provincial parks, beaches, and campgrounds to ensure that more services are accessible to people regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. Commencing 2018-19 and going forward, DNR will make at least one provincial beach in every region barrier free within three years after NS Accessibility Plan is in place.

The Department will work to ensure new buildings are built for accessibility and older buildings are improved as appropriate. DNR is also committed to having a workforce which is inclusive, free of discrimination, values diversity in talent, and is representative at all job levels.

Departmental Expenses Summary

Natural Resources Expenses Summary

($ thousands)

Programs and Services	2017-2018 Estimate	2017-2018 Forecast	2018-2019 Estimate
Senior Management	864	905	893
Renewable Resources	24,520	24,058	24,748
Geoscience and Mines	4,341	4,477	4,704
Regional Services	38,809	39,116	40,659
Policy, Planning & Support Services	4,464	4,952	4,419
Land Services	4,180	4,037	4,178
Total - Departmental Expenses	**77,178**	**77,545**	**79,601**
Ordinary Recoveries	881	1,357	1,092
Funded Staff (# of FTEs)			
Department Funded Staff	**630.0**	**619.4**	**629.0**

Notes:

2017-18 Forecast - Additional costs of $367K approved for recoverable fire suppression costs, online reservation fees, and resale of firewood & ice.

2018-19 Budget – Additional costs of $659K approved for provincial lifeguard service, $700K for Mineral Resources Development Fund (replaces $400K Mineral Incentive Program), $394K for amortization (primarily for helicopters) & $874K for wage increases.

Ordinary Revenues: See Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2

TCA Purchase Requirements: See Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1